

Hello Everybody,

Anna wanted me to include a few details about my month in Europe this summer. The question I get asked the most about it is: was this something through the school? No, it was not through Central Michigan officially but agents for International Student Volunteers are allowed to make presentations in classrooms across the world to recruit volunteers for their programs and CMU is no exception.

The first two weeks of the program for me was spent near Kakanj, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 10 other students from the U.S. and Canada. We stayed in this building (right) which lost its electricity and indoor plumbing for most of our stay. We worked on making paths, picnic areas, and a bridge to improve the site which had been a local recreational area before the Bosnian war of independence in the 1990's and had fallen into ill-repair. In fact, the last people to have stayed at



Mehoric (the name of the site) were French UN soldiers trying to establish communication lines to the besieged city of Sarajevo 60km to the south. This area was pretty much untouched by the war itself but nearly all of the young men in the area were sent to Sarajevo to lift the siege, one forest worker had been shot 7 times in the war and showed us some of his scars, very proudly I'll add. Since the war, as some of you might know, Bosnia and Herzegovina was

splint into 3 administrative units, each dominated by Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, or Bosnian Muslims and the area we stayed in was in the Islamic section so there were some cultural differences between us and our hosts mostly concerning some of the girls in our group, but nothing too serious. During our two weeks of working, we were taken on some excursions into Kakanj (a city of about 30,000 people) and some of the surrounding historical attractions. One of these was a 14th century Franciscan monastery (below left) and a 15th century mosque (below right) built by Mehmet II, the oldest surviving mosque in Bosnia (The Serbs made a point to destroy mosques during the war).



The second part of the whole experience was a 2 week “adventure tour.” We drove through some beautiful country and quickly visited Sarejevo on our way to the Dalmatian coast where we boarded a boat called the Moja Maja in Dubrovnik. First we visited the old walled city in Dubrovnik though which was really great, we took a city walls tour from which I took many pictures including this one below. For the first week we traveled north up the coast with stops in Korcula, the hometown of Marco Polo, Omis, an old pirate town with a beautiful cove, Bol, home of Europe's best beach according to some traveling magazines “The Golden Horn,” and end our cruise in Split.



We headed inland and kayaked down a river and visited Plitvice National Park before traveling to Zagreb where we stayed at a youth hostel and took a city walking tour. I also bought a lot of candy from the Kraš factory near our hostel, very good stuff. Then we traveled to Bovec, Slovenia with a stop at Lake Bled, a popular resort town in the Julian Alps where the picture on the newsletter was taken. Bovec was a pretty small town further up in the mountains that they call the adventure capital of Slovenia. I went hydrospeeding there which is basically riding a sled down rapids. Some of the other kids went rock-climbing, skydiving, paragliding, and so on, just about everything you can think of as far as adventure sports were available here. We wrapped up our whole experience at Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia by picking up last minute souvenirs and such. I met some Americans who live in France and Germany that were visiting the area and they told me that Croatia is the place where Europeans like to vacation because it is just as beautiful as Italy but much less commercialized and the people much more honest. So I definitely recommend going there if you get the chance.

